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Sincerely yours
M. E. Banta

SONGS OF HOME.

BY M. E. BANTA.



MENASHA, WISCONSIN.
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GIFT OF
MRS. MAY WRIGHT FOWELL
BY MRS. IDA HUSTED HARPER
LITERARY EXECUTOR

1923

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MY BOOK

IS GRATEFULLY AND REVERENTLY
INSCRIBED TO THE MEMORY OF HER
FROM WHOSE HEART MY OWN FIRST
CAUGHT THE LOVE OF ALL THAT WAS
BEST AND MOST BEAUTIFUL, WHOSE
LOVE FOR ME WAS STEADFAST EVEN
UNTO DEATH—MY GENTLE MOTHER.

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PREFACE.

To only the few whose good hearts care for *me*, will this modest book be known. And even these may sometimes think that silence would have been golden. Yet to its author the love of beauty was given as much as to Tennyson, or Riley, and the impulse of its expression would not be denied. The brown song sparrow pipes as assuredly in the first yellowing sunshine of February, as the master-singer among the magnolias in the fullness of summertime, and is he not welcome? So I—even I, dare to hold out my hand with this little book, the epitome of your friend

M. E. BANTA.

Songs of Home.

Songs of Home.

My Mother.

I hear a soft voice sweet and low,
Singing an old-time air,
Dreamy and sweet on the drowsy breeze,
Out in the moonlight fair.
“My Mother dear,”—Oh, the silvery tones!
How they melt in my throbbing heart,
With the living memories hoarded there,
Of the days when she, apart
From all of earth, was fondest loved,
And seemed its fairest part.

My Mother! Oh, I see her now,
With her fond and pensive smile,
And pure, dark eyes, so like this light,
When turned on her little child;
And I ne’er behold the moonlit night,

And the purple sky above,
Solemn and still in shade and light,
As the mingled look of love,
And shadowed depth of fondest care,
That in her dark eye strove,

But I dream, all hushed, with misty eyes,
Of her, and that distant day,
In childhood's home, so bright with bloom,
That mid the green trees lay;—
Our gray home by the winding road,
So near the dimpling stream;
Where from the porch through clustered trees,
We saw the tall spire's gleam—
How I long to see the spot once more
By sunset's ruddy beam!



Nettie.

Nettie, with the nut brown hair,
 Wavy, rippling into curls,
With her soft, clear, ringing laugh,
 She 's my queen of all the girls.

Nettie's cheeks are like the peach,
 Her lips a ripe June rose between,
And oh! her fond, shy, saucy eyes—
 There lies the power of my queen.

There 's Helen with the midnight glance,
 Starry and holy like the night ;
And Maud, whose hazel fills with' dreams ;
 But sweetest hers in mirthful light.

I tried one day to kiss the sprite ;
 She shook her silken curls at me,
And laughing, like a swallow fled,
 Crying, "Oh, that can never be!"

Ah, me ! I scarce know why it is ;
The joy that drew my life from me
Sends back the life tide lonesomely,
When Nettie thus flits off in glee.
My soul no more obeys my will,
But trembles as a bud half blown
Within the thrilling of the wind,
To her sweet voice's music tone.



The Gruesome Rain.

All day I have listened the grieving wind
From over the sodden plain,
As it shook and twisted the naked trees,
And swirled by the drifting rain,
Falling so dim with hollow roar,
Like the sea where breakers foam,
Or its long black swell on the shingle gray,
Where the fretted tide waves comb.

Through the monotone of the winter wind
Memory hears sweet voices low,
That only memory shall hear more,
From out of the long ago.
And the gray rain as a background shows
Old scenes that are only air ;
For time and faces have passed away—
I only, of all, am here.

I see, as I hear the voiceful wind,
In the depths of the dim gray storm,
A scene in tenderest contrast smile,
All flowery, sunny and warm,

Under a spreading china tree,
In the southern sunshine's glow,
With cool verandas twining 'round
A cottage quaint and low.

Within, a childish mother sings
Her babe to smiling rest,
And two boyish arms, with pride and love,
Press both to his happy breast,
While the breeze hums soft in the jasmine's spray,
Blowing in on its sea-wet breath :
And in all the light, and bloom, and love,
Is no lurking hint of death.

The roses bloom like a paradise,
And great white blossoms blow,
'Mid the glossy green of ~~the~~ magnolia trees,
In odorous drifts of snow.
The myrtle sprays thro' their crimped depths
Catch the shell-like pink of dawn,
And flowers blow with the many hues
Of the west when day is gone.

In a spreading live-oak, towering high,
Like a guardian standing near,
'Mid its curtains soft of silvery moss,
The mockbird's trill I hear

Through all the long, bright summer day,
Till the evening stars appear,
And singing his matchless roundelay
In the moonlight, still and clear.

Oh, stars that watch in the purple sky,
Sweet moon, so pale and pure,
Awaken these happy sleepers to
The woe coming swift and sure.
For death is here—oh, gruesome rain!
There 's a dirge in your solemn roar,
With the minor strain of the wailing wind
Chording its deep chant o'er.

In mockery glows the coming sun
On desolate, empty streets,
Where the dead-cart and its driver grim
Are the only life one meets.
And shrieks ring here, and sobs moan there,
And the sexton digs all day
Where the dead-carts leave their lonely loads,
'Mid the heaps of fresh dug clay.

In the cottage low 'neath the China tree
Now no girlish mother sings,
While the scented jasmine's starry spray
Blows in on the breeze's wings.
And the boyish father, too, is gone,
And the baby sleeps for aye,

Though the roses bloom like paradise
Under the summer sky.

Oh, winter wind!—gray, gruesome storm—

Where are my vanished friends?

Where drifts the current of all the years?

Say whither my own life tends.

Are those voices dead forever and aye.

Or waiting for me somewhere?

Will the whole of vanishing life but be

Memory's pictures painted on air?



The Land Beyond.



There is a land, though none knows where.

Or far, or near, was ever said;

We name it by our hopes and fears,

And people it with all our dead,

A darkling sea, the realm of space,

Whose only shore that mystic land,

Spreads, island studded with the stars,

Between us and its silent strand.

Not one of all our loved and lost

Has e'er crossed twice that shimmering sea,

To bind our bleeding hearts with balm,

Or tell us what their fate may be.

But still we hope and weave fair dreams,

The warp, that land of evermore,

The woof, death's subtile alchemy,

All loved and lost things to restore.

We think this world is passing fair,

And poet-natures feel how grand;

But loftier blue o'er greener vales

Bends crystalline above that land.

Pink-purple flushed, its mountains rear
Their stately peaks sublime on high.
As sunrise of a balmy spring
Ne'er faded from its ambient sky.

There roll blue rivers, shadow flecked,
By clouds and never leafless trees,
Some home-loved trees of earth, perhaps,
That whisper to the fragrant breeze.
And there, beside their affluent tides,
All pain and wrong forever done.
Wander in youth's perfected grace,
Undying, all our loved and gone.

And hopes which mocked us long ago,
As dancing lights in lone fens cheat
The longing traveler's hope of rest,
Loves that went out, as light and heat
Under wild March's flying clouds,
Friendships which changed as falls the frost
On glorious June, and generous deeds
Wasted on churls—whole lives so lost;
There where death's shallop o'er the main
Its phantom prow turns to the shore,
All wrongs a recompense shall right,
To those who reach the evermore.

Hunting Paw Paws.

Down along the river valley,
Where the fallen leaves lie thick,
Under maples dyed like sunset,
And red gums in crimson flame,
Come with me. The crooked river,
Blue with shade or lit with light,
Winds among its sands in beauty
Where the drooping elms lean over,
By the white trunked sycamore.
It is sweet to stretch one's form,
Careless, on the green, cool bank,
Where through thinning leaves above us,
We can watch the light clouds swim
Through the mellow autumn haze;
While below, the murmuring water,
And around, the rustling breeze,
Lull to sleep life's fretful care.
This still hour on Nature's heart
Will give our childhood back again,
And all life's toils and smarting ills
Take, as mothers wipe off tears.

Let us go then, where the trees
Part, and pours the sunshine through
Full on bushes, tropic leaved.
Down among the fragrant foliage
Fallen new, their spicy wealth
May be found, all brown and golden.
Stoop and gather. As we break
Honeyed lobes of melting marrow,
Fancy lightly flies away
Where the coral atol circles
Still lagoons in shining seas;
Flies to where the feathered palm tree
Graceful lifts to glowing skies;
Where the tropic's humid fervor
Fosters fruitage rich and rare.
Strange this seems amidst our forest,
With no kindred growth anigh,
As some hardy exile lonely,
From a sunny land afar.
While we search with eager fingers,
Hearts that throb with Nature's pulse,
All unheeded pass the moments,
Though the sunlight lower slants.
Scarcely more careless glides the squirrel,
Plumed and graceful, o'er the green:
Or more gleeful call the blue jays,
Many voiced, from tree to tree.

Than ourselves when homeward wending,
Filled with autumn sights and sounds,
Glad with Nature's pure caresses.
And the scent, to surfeit rich,
Of our paw paws, brown and yellow,
Seems the spirit of the fall,
And our fair and stately forests;
Seems a subtle, sweet recall
Of the river, winding changeful,
Blue with shade or lit with light
Of the sky, o'er tawny hill-tops;
Woods ablush to Autumn's kiss,
Where, amid their riven beauty,
Flooded by October's sun,
Slender trees stand, tropic leaved,
Golden yellow, all alone.



Childhood Memories.

I remember with a pleasure
Very near akin to pain,
All that mingled in my childhood,
Like a distant sweet refrain.

Like a minor song at dewfall,
By a voice I know and love,
From out of dusky distance,
With eve's purple sky above.

Our brown old home lay nestled
In the lap of circling hills.
Where the dandelion golden
Grew thick along the rills.

The shadows of the Locust trees
Swayed lightly on the grass,
While the boughs with sighing rustle
Tapped the up-stairs window glass.

In the quaint, old-fashioned garden
Grew hollyhocks and chives;
And a bench beneath the cherry trees
Held up the yellow hives.

Oh, those old trees were so pretty
In their springtime snowy bloom,
With the young green glancing through,
O'er the beehives humming rune.

Will the purple apple blossoms
Ever smell as sweet again,
Or the robin in their branches
Sound so musical as then?

Will the harebell and the oxlips
Ever nod so merry more,
As those my bare feet hunted then
The shadowed woodland o'er?

Ah me! no more I'll clamber
To search the swallow's nests;
Or catch the brooklet's shiners
Where the willow shadow rests.

Never watch the glowing sunset
Where the cloud-rifts gleam with gold,
Watch again for angel faces,
As with beating heart of old.

I will say no more in twilight
With the watching stars above,
Thinking less what mother taught me,
Than of her perfect love.

“Now I lay me,” and “Our Father.”
Oh, the simple peace of then!
It was sweeter than life’s fullness
Ever gave to me again.



My Doorstep.

This old, worn doorstep may not seem
To many, a poetic theme,
Curved hollow where our feet have gone,
Beneath the stoop, wild briar grown;
But as I gaze out on the scene
So long familiar, cool and green,
What varied visions, thronging fast,
Float shadowy from the checkered past.
'T was twenty years and more ago,
Since first I stood this stoop below,
Beside my young mate's sturdy form,
Our baby boy upon his arm;
Not then before us trees in bloom,
Or billowy grasses waving plume;
No blossoms wooed the summer breeze,
No luscious fruitage on the trees,
But fancy's eyes saw all and more,
As we three stood within the door;
For youth is rich in hopeful dreams,
And near and true the mirage seems.

Another picture, oh, how sweet,
The yearning eyes of memory meet;
'T is autumn, and the sky o'ercast,
Sifts the first snow flakes light and fast;
The door flings open: o'er its sill,
Two boys the house with clamor fill;
Quick to my side they laughing spring,
And with caress and kisses cling.
"Oh, mother, see! 't is snowing fast,—
Look how it whirls the window past!
Hurrah! It gathers deep and white!
We'll have a splendid snowball fight!"
Oh, scarcely knew I in those days
Of childish love and gladsome plays,
How blest to have them near always.
Tears well and drop my cheek upon,
For oh, my *little* boys are gone.
Two sturdy men who seem some other
Than those wild elves, still call me mother,
But yet my foolish heart makes moan.—
Those *little* boys were all my own!

A later vision, fair and dear,
Comes to me on my doorstep here;
'T is my wee girl with earnest face,
Seeking and loving Nature's grace,
From the wild bee on scented clover,

To the soft cloud shapes floating over,
Or murmurous boughs or falling shower,
Dull worm, or painted fly or flower;
With love innate, to living things,
Her sweet child nature thrilling springs:
Nothing in Nature she may see
But brings her questioning to me.
Oh! soul like harp Æolian strung
For all sweet things to play upon,
I tremble as the swift years go,
For all the pain such souls must know.

Another form, once tall and strong,
Comes slowly up yon path along,
The grave, white head is bent in thought,
The hands, clasped idly, backward brought;
A strong face with a master's will
To grasp and conquer fortune's ill,
Turning the adverse to success.
Lifts up to me in tenderness.
Yes, his had been a marvelous skill
To bend life's elements to his will:
But well I know the old man's dreams
No longer were his prosperous schemes.
Backward throughout his many days,
He, silent, traced life's devious ways,
Marks how time robs us in bestowing,

His gifts but loss, resistless going,
Oh, hearts are poems magical,
And lives are plays most tragical!

The holiest dream among them all
Comes awesome as the twilight's fall,
When, solemn from the sky's far blue,
Night's shadowed hush drops with the dew.
A form as frail as girlhood's slight,
A sweet, pale face with love alight,
And eyes that 'mind me of the night,—
So calm, so pure, so darkly bright;
With my wee daughter, hand in hand,
My dearest loves before me stand,
Ah! nerveless, vain, all words of mine
To picture love so near divine!
Enough that all things tender, true,
Pure, patient, point my thoughts to you.
Grander than is the bloodstained wreath,
Woven to honor the warrior's death,
Should be love's chaplet for a mother's name.
That living sacrifice unknown to fame!
One saddest summer Sabbath morn,
That e'er from golden gate of dawn
The glowing day stole rosy through.
The angel Azrael beckoned you:
A white-robed angel, tender faced.

Strong, beautiful in manhood's grace,
Came noiselessly that solemn morn
Among our weeping band forlorn;
Softly your loving, dark eyes closed,
And hushed your heart in last repose;
Kissed gently, as a mother fond,
Your time-tired soul his breast upon,
Then with his glance of light abroad,
With flight like thought you were with God.



The Neglect of Sympathy.

Our lives are full enough of pain,
Where'er the lines be cast,
For loss and wrong walk side by side
With each life to the last;
But for how much of numbing pain
Which smiling faces hide,
True, loving, tender, timely words
A blessing might betide.

I 've watched the world for many a year,
And this I see is true:
That each one struggles to be first,
The last one may be—*you*;
Yet there is good in human hearts,
And human love is sweet,
Though we are heedless in life's rush
To stay the slipping feet.

So many weary eyes look out
On hueless, empty days,
And life is heavy to the feet
That walk these dreary ways.

God's love from out their leaden sky
Looks vague and coldly far,
Warm human love like sunshine seems,
Compared with evening's star.

I 've stood beside a marble face
Whose dear eyes were asleep—
Whose lips were never hushed before
When I was wont to weep—
And keenest of my pain, the thought,
The words I 'd left unsaid;
Though strong to bear, I might have helped
My loving, loyal dead.

Ah, friend, remember life is short,
And sharp with many a woe,
And pause to cheer with faith and love
Poor mortals as you go.
One kindly spoken, hopeful word
Is worth all eulogies,
When broken heart and "dull, cold ears"
Care naught for flatteries.

Midsummer.

Over the stubble fields
Midsummer's sun fall white. The sky above
Bends pale and faint in the oppressive heat.
Under yon clump of trees, with not a leaf astir,
The herd groups listlessly. No restless life
In all the indolent scene, save by the shrunken brook,
Where butterflies in golden bevvies drink,
Or on the thistle tops, among the whitened weeds
Fringing the dusty road, the bumble-bee
Drones to the flashing goldfinch, swaying light
On silken seed tuft. Stirring the drowsy heat,
Pulses the August fly, its quavering tones
Lifting and falling in a dreamy swirl.
The birds are gone to leafy, dim retreats,
Where sunshine enters but in shadowy gleams,
And not a silver note, from field or copse,
Rouses the swooning air. The cornfields stand
Within the quivering heat, lifting their shrivelled blades
In piteous prayer for rain, that late
Rustled like plumed host their dark green ranks.

All living nerves are captive to the spell
Narcotic, of pervading heat and hush.
Yet vague unrest, some undefined impulse
Torments the indolence, as yonder kine
Impatient whisk the flies.

A sun tipped cloud,
Low poised and billowy, in the hazy west
Startles the still heat with rolling throbs of sound
While golden blushes light its purple foam.
Lo, all the slumbrous tree-tops move
And nod together in the sultry breeze!
Gray clouds shade swiftly into black,
And fold on fold swell upward to the sun,
Obscuring soon its glare, while ominous blue
Floods the low west. And now abroad
The tender gloom of near approaching rain
Blends with a solemn, conscious hush.
The freshening wind's storm-scented breath
Blows balmy from the pearl fringed clouds,
Sweeping to earth far off, whence come
Avant couriers, like trampling steeds,
Dropping great crystals to the advancing roar
And whiteness of the descending rain.

An Old Man's Madrigal.

Come out in the sunshine with me today,
Dear love, and wander once more away
Where velvety bees in buttercups drone,
And the brown thrush sings, let us go alone.
See the sky is as bright as beautiful eyes,
And its glory bends o'er a paradise!
For the May has come to the youthful year,
And only we two seem old, my dear,
'Mid the growing loveliness far and near.
Over there, where lifts the transparent green
Of beeches aglow in the sunshine's sheen,
Where fern fronds beckon, and purple bloom
Of wild phlox faintly the shades perfume—
In this temple pure, let our souls commune
With its veiled High Priest, who will call us soon!
For, though May has come to the youthful year,
We are as snow drifts, lingering here,
From the warmth and light to disappear.

My love 's no girlish, wild-rose face,
But I gather it close in my weak embrace,

And, tremulous, smooth the thin white hair
That once was a wealth of spun gold rare;
And I scarce can see the eyes so bright
Ere they shadow^{ed} with death's coming night;
For to us, after May, there shall draw anear
No riant June of a glad new year
This side of the sunset almost here.
But we hope while we wait alone today,
Our love all that lives of our vanished May,
That the withered cheeks and worn forms hold,
Like yon prisoned worm in its cocoon cold,
A beauty no human lip hath told,
In a form unguessed, shall arise and soar
In most glorious sunshine forever more,
Shake off, like that worm, our wrinkled clay,
Catching hues undreamed in our earthly May.

An Autumn Revery.

There 's much that 's sweet left yet for me,
Though life's sad autumn time it be;
For all fair things the Maker makes,
Each lovely form which nature takes,
Are pleasant still as long ago,
More constant than most friends below.
Back in the mellowing, yellow light
Which first transfigures winter's blight.
Upon the leafless tree tops high,
Traced sharply 'gainst the cold, clear sky,
Throbbing with musical ecstasy,
The blue bird comes each spring to me.
And romping jays with varying note
Among the branches flower-like float;
While, from the frost bleached meadow near,
The lark's sweet whistle, loud and clear,
Blends with the homely robin's troll.
Sweetest of all the tuneful whole,
Whether on bright or clouded day,
The brown wren's modest heartsome lay,
To me, these welcome, tuneful friends

Each coming springtime kindly sends;
And vernal breezes touch my hair
With sea-wet fingers, lingering there;
My brow their cool lips gently press,
Soothing me into tranquillity.
I love to dream and who may tell
Whether 't is but my fancy's spell,
That some of all my dead and gone
Come to me those soft wings upon.
And all the flowers which languid swoon
On the warm breast of ardent June,—
And nesting birds, and bee hive's rune,—
Even the wee folk in the grass,
And weeds of summer as they pass
Down under autumn's fallen leaves,
Where dying summer lingering grieves,
Greet me and cheer me, till one lay
Frost driven—the cricket sings at last
Beside my hearth to winter's blast.

And human love is left to me,
Saddened and changed though I may be,
With life's best hours all in the past;
When of its largess all at last
But three or four to love me left—
Yet am not I of all bereft;
I'm thankful, though so much alone,

And feel my life work nearly done,
That when my pulses shall be slow
And cease to thrill to all below,
I still can trust these three or four
To love me till I am no more.



Alone.

Down from the hospital's lonesome tower,
In wind or calm, sunshine or rain,
Come autumn, or spring, or winter time,
Fell ever the sound of this sad refrain,
"Not a friend in the world!—alone! alone!"
Year in, year out, wailed this desolate moan.

There was woe as vast as the mighty waste
Of the broad Atlantic's sullen deep,
When the north wind's might sets tempests loose,
Bearing wreck and death in its curbless sweep,
In this desolate cry from the tower lone,
"Not a friend in the world!—alone! alone!"

The story was never told to me,
What brought to this hospital's tower lone,
This frozen soul from a ruined life,
Making forever its desolate moan,
"Not a friend in the world!—alone! alone!"
But I knew that despair had won its own.

And fancy pictured a woman fair,
With every gift of womanhood rare.

For the voice like a flute was clear and low,
That wailed from the tower its deathless woe,
Forsaken despair in every tone,
“Not a friend in the world!—alone! alone!”

What human wrong and loss had broke
The poor mad woman’s heart in the tower,
Grated and all apart from her kind,
Shut up with despair to her dying hour?
I never knew—but when love is flown
From a woman’s life then her life is done.



Brown County's Hills.

When burns the sumac's wandering flame
And gum and dogwood catch aglow
Oh, then, from out my lowland home,
To your fair heights what joy to go.
How sweet your echoing solitudes,
Where but the blue jay's fearless call
Startles a silence so profound,
One hears the ripe leaves' drifting fall.

October's hazy halo swims
Across the ridges to the sky,
From purple softness to the glow
Of gold and crimson nearer by,
Where, peering through the deepening shade
Far downward, dizzy slopes I see,
Glimpsing through thickets far below
The knotted roots of upmost tree.

The great oaks stand with lifted arms,
In mourning purple, as below,
'Mong withered leaves, the wee folks chirp
Their quavering death song, sad and slow.

From out the sunshine's warm caress,

A cold breath, like a shivering sigh,

Troubles the forest, prophesying

The cold white silence drawing nigh.

And yet I love them so the best;

Not when the dogwood spreads its white,

Or lush green tells of summer time,

Are Brown's fair hills so lovely quite.

We are attuned to minor tones,

Our light hath e'er a shadow sad,

And tears well often in the heart

When God knows we would fain be glad.

Oh, all the pettiness of life

Drops off when standing face to face

With Nature on the lonely hills—

Freedom's majestic dwelling place.

Above life's moil their rarer air

Though Autumn's bale fires redly burn,

Like wine our jaded strength renews,

And childhood's peace and faith return.

My Spectacles.

Sad I pause in retrospection,
As I lift my glasses light,
Filled with sudden rueful wonder
That *I* need such aid to sight.
Surely not so many years
As this means, lie dead between
Life's glad morning and to-day,
Through these glimmering glasses seen.

Ah, but it is many a year,
Since I left the homestead gray,
Nestled by the river margin,
Where the elm and plane trees sway,
Where below, the droning mill wheel
Rhythmic measure kept all day,
To the soft pour of the water
O'er the dam not far away.

Since I saw my father standing,
Dusty, at the open door,
Hale and ruddy, gathering in
Cheerily his golden store.

Since I saw my mother sitting,
 Dream-eyed, at the eventide,
Resting in the flickering firelight,
 Of the log-heaped ingleside.

Since the glossy pool I waded,
 Where the white pond lily gleams,
Or with pin-hooks tried for fish
 In rocky alder shaded streams;
Since with little sweetheart Jen,
 I sought where lifts the dogwood's snow,
For windflowers and wild violets,
 Or summer cardinal's scarlet glow.

Brown eyes in a gypsy face,
 Tawny curls and low, broad brow,
Where in all the wide, wide world
 Can I find the sweet face now?
Sometimes comes a silent woman,
 Brown eyes dead with unshed tears,
Curls around the furrowed brow,
 But grizzled with the cruel years.

Great drops splash my spectacles,
 Like autumn rain a-turn to sleet.
And, looking on life's downward slope,
 I see where shore and ocean meet.

With shadowing hand I peer to see
The dear crafts that went out amain;
But not a white sail beckons me,
Or signals to my cry again.



Cui Bono?

What 's the good of life's enduring,
Striving, grieving, hopes alluring,
While all flies us in pursuing,
 Like the mirage o'er the sand;
As the Arab sees green palm groves
By blue waters as he roves,
Receding ever as he moves,
 So the hopes and joys of man.

With the Spaniard grave we query,
As life's disappointments weary,
Darken hope with storms so dreary,
 Of life's total, "What 's the good?"
Since the voyagers beside us
Care so little what betide us,
For our very woes deride us
 Why hold up and breast the flood?

Hope's delusion comes in childhood,
When it fires the thoughts and heart blood
With such radiant dreams of rare good,
 When youth's stature shall be won;

Half the beauty of its sunrise
Falls undecided on their child eyes,
Out of calmest, loveliest skies,
 Never prized till it is done.

So the youth, the boy or maiden,
Nigh contemptuous of life's aiden,
Of life's morning, flower laden,
 Dream their dreams of time ahead
When their fellows shall be victors,
Serving, honoring them, the victors,—
Even maidens see such pictures,—
 Till youth passes and is dead.

Life's meridian is a battle,
Ah, 't is strange amidst its rattle,
All its surging strife and brattle,
 Men and women can dream dreams.
But hope's mirage, broader, fairer,
Shapes its outlines, nearer, rarer.
Though our sight, by tears washed clearer,
 Knows there 's much that only seems.

When old age's locks of snow
Shade sunk eyes that lose their glow,
When its thin voice quavers low
 In life's time of saddest dearth.

Doth hope's vision false still glimmer,
O'er death's arid sands still shimmer,
Brighter grow as time grows dimmer,
In man's passage swift from earth?

Ah, my soul, will death's undoing
End at last hope's vain pursuing,
On its farther shore still viewing
The fair mirage reached at last?
'Neath the palm trees shall our feet rest,
By blue waters end our quest,
Hope's fruition calm the breast
When earth's journey shall be past?



My Studio.

You think it is nonsense, friend Skeptic,
And laugh with amusement quite keen,
When I speak of the Author of Evil
As one to be really seen;
Come to my studio with me—
I 've his portraits in many a light,
And, I think, when you 've looked at the pictures,
You 'll admit that my statement is right.
He 's a myth of man's ignorant fancy,
Whom facts will most easily slay;
There 's nothing but matter forever,
From planet to monad, you say!
Well, well, turn this picture about;
Here's a view ~~that~~ you 've certainly seen.
Mark this man with his sinewy limbs,
And his face with dark glances keen;
Here 's his friend quite his equal in manhood,
But women and liquor and play
Have roughened life's tides into rapids,
And its peace will be foundered to-day.

Behind them 's a sinister figure,
Standing dark as the midnight hour,
And his eyes from a fathomless blackness
Shoot, starlike, their ~~deep~~, baleful power.
As formless as tempest's his figure,
But you know it incarnate hate,
As he bends with commanding gesture,
And spells them with direful fate.
Look! here 's the companion sequel;
They have lost all their manhood's grace,
And a look of abjectest horror
Has frosted, like age, one's face,
While the other is prostrate and pallid,
And writhing in death where he lies.
Gleams a laugh like a sharp saber flashing,
As anger's black spirit flies.

And over this picture you 'll linger
And study with interest, I 'm sure.
The girl is so youthful and winsome,
So pretty and graceful and pure;
See the long, sunny curls on her shoulders.
The face like a blush rose in bloom,
And true eyes like velvety pansies—
But beside her is standing her doom!
No longer repulsive the figure;
An Antinous, slender and tall,

Whose breath, beyond Bacchus' vintage
Will fire her soul to its fall.
There 's a snare in the silken brown tresses,
Waving back from his brow broad and white,
And a spell in his deep hazel glances
Will lure her away from all right.
Like a twin of the lover she worships,
Fulfilling strong nature's behest,
Is the beautiful, treacherous spirit
Using love to perform his behest.

Turn away now your lingering glances,
And look on this gloomier sight;
'T is a great city's dingy purlieu,
And the time a dull winter night.
Only a grim, silent watchman,
Is keeping his dismal beat,
And seen by the fog-shrouded gaslight,
With a woman, dead-drunk, in the street.
Bloated and sodden and senseless,
All the thin, tangled hair unconfined,
And her pitiful rags lift and flutter
In the piercing cold winter wind.
No Antinous now is beside her;
His work was well done on the morn
When her false lover, loathing his victim,
Flung her forth on society's scorn.

But passion and appetite blended—
A filthy and horrible thing—
With a coil like a poisonous serpent,
You see 'round the poor creature cling.
Alas! for the sunny haired maiden,
Whose face was a blush rose in bloom;
Whose eyes, like sweet English violets,
Breathed her soul out as they their perfume.

And here is a statelier picture,
The dwelling of riches and pride,
Where, regal 'midst laces and satins,
Soft colors and lights, stands a bride,
No exotic, whose delicate fragrance
Fills these halls with a sensuous delight,
Is more faultlessly formed, or is fairer
Than this queen of the *salon* to-night.
See her bend to the man who approaches
With stateliest, courtliest grace,
And the man is her complement manly,
With a noble and eloquent face.
Not one of the critical many
Who gaze on these beings so rare,
Would guess from their bright, smiling faces,
Their hearts beat with sharpest despair.
But she 's bartered affection for jewels,
Her purity, truth and her life,

For the pomp and the power of station,
With only the title of wife.

Her lover, whose passionate power
Held rule o'er the empire of thought,
She weighed in society's balance,
And it drew against riches as naught.
See this cynical creature of fashion—
Of most opulent elegance—

'T is Satan in form of a woman
Who thralls her with bold, lofty glance.

Here 's the sequel—a picture in shadow,
No light through the gloom any place;
But a church's vast, solemn stillness,
And a shrouded dead woman's face.
Waxen flowers are wrought all about her,
In costliest, rarest device,
And the funeral blackness commingled
A great city's grief might suffice.
But really only one mourner
Stands woefully dumb by the bier,—
Her soul in despairing posture,
With a fiend in his own shape near.
Death gave but a brief day's warning,
And her spirit, whence truth had fled,
Losing all reliance in goodness,
A scoffer, has passed to the dead.

Have you patience to look at another,
From among a collection so vast;
Why, daily the gallery is growing,
But, friend, we 'll make this the last.
'T is a homestead, where orchard trees cluster,
And orchard trees group o'er the stile,
Where sweet scented clover fields mingle
With golden grain, many a mile.
The sun has sunk redly in glory,
And the round moon rolled up in the east,
And the farmer is free from his toiling,
At home in the moonlight's broad peace.
On the breeze which bestirs the white curtain
Swells a song like a musical dream,
And we see through the wide open casement
A group, by the candle's dim beam,
A father, a son and a mother
Kneel softly in reverent prayer,
And the lad looks pure as a maiden,
And scarcely less daintily fair.
All is beauty and peace, and night's shadows
But deepen the sweet restful scene:
And the angels in white robes and pinions
May pause to enjoy it unseen.
But it passes; the great gothic college
Lapped in sward and bright flowers around,
Where beautiful trees, old and stately,

Throw cool shadows down on the ground
Is the next; and a youth, lithe and slender,
Whose face like a maiden's is fair,
With gray eyes so deep and so brilliant,
And riches of black curling hair.
When the sun shall go down in red glory,
And the round moon roll up in the east,
The time when he drinks at this fountain
Of knowledge forever will cease.
'Mong his fellows to-day he is victor,
For intellect, delicate, strong,
Has won him, in many a contest,
The first place in all of the throng.
As he steps with magnetic power
Before the great listening mass,
How his deep manly tones of farewell
Thrills even his college class.
And eyes that are all unaccustomed
To weep at such ~~old~~ hackneyed theme,
Gather jewels more brilliant than diamonds;
And the grave old professors seem
Overshadowed with swift falling sadness,
As they watch his impassioned face,
And thrill to the magical power
Of thought, and the orator's grace.
Oh, heaven! beside him is standing,
One arm thrown in careless embrace.

The other, uplifted and holding
A goblet with Bacchante's grace,
His tempter, a being alluring,
Her blush like the rosy red wine,
And her locks like the purpling cluster
So muskily sweet on the vine.
But her eye has the charm of the serpent;
Though archly its swimming light laughs,
And her breath holds the poison of upas
For the lip which the red goblet quaffs.

Here 's the end. A gas jet is burning
Dim and dismal, within a small room,
Where the carpet is tattered and faded,
Undusted for weeks, of a broom.
No fire to warm or to cheer it,
Though shotted sleet rattles the pane,
And the wind, in a wild, gusty moaning,
Sweeps heavily by with the rain.
On a couch in the corner reclining
We can see, by the dim burning jet,
Is a man once of noblest presence,
And his wan face is beautiful yet.
But we know by its pallor so deathly,
And the sunken eyes' glittering light,
Though alone, with no pity to shrive him,
His spirit must pass hence to-night.

By his side is a terrible figure
That curdles the blood to see;
Ah, no goblin of mythical fable
Could so fearful and hideous be!
His glance is a smouldering fire;
Blue flames are his thick curling hair;
And the glow of a white heat quivers,
Through the face of the specter there.
The eye of the poor dying victim
Discovers the murderous form,
And his shriek, in wild mortal horror,
Rings shrilly out over the storm.
Could ideas be drawn, as are figures,
Pity's tear drops would rain from your eyes,
As this tortured, despairing mortal
Recalls amid low wailing cries,
The scenes of his vanished promise—
Hell is grappling him now ere he dies!
He remembered the red sun sinking,
And the full-orbed, fair summer moon,
Flooding silvery a far distant farm-house,
And a pleasant, familiar old room,
Where the white curtain flutters and beckons
In the night breeze which voices a hymn,
And the whiteheaded, loving old couple
Softly praying within it, for him.
And he thinks, as the damned remember,

Of their far-away graves, side by side,
In the elder and bramble-grown grave yard,
And curses that he had not died
When his cheek was as fresh as a maiden's,
And his heart was as pure and as true.
His young life, so hopeful at college,
Passes swift in a mournful review;
Alas! it was there that Bacchante
First held up her goblet to view,
And there that a beautiful maiden
First thrilled him with young love's dream.
And there on that old moonlit evening,
They blended their young lives' stream.
Can it be it was *his* hand that struck her—
He that ruined her whole life's grace,
And forced her to fly with her children,
And leave him alone in this place?
Oh, God! All alone! And dying!
Where now the obsequious friends,
Who flattered his noonday of power,
And used him for policy's ends;
Who netted his poor wavering footsteps,
And fettered his poor, feeble hands,
But used his great brain while it lasted
To work out their own selfish plans?
Once they told him his voice had a magic
To stir the "dear people," *en masse*,

And he was their watchword and glory—
Do they think so this sad night? Alas!
Fierce the casement is shaken by storm-wind,
And rattles the sleet on the pane,
While a cold air, like blast from the Northland,
Puffs the gas jet; and looking again,
That terrible form goes out dimly,
As falls the poor agonized head
Of the victim, whose birthright was honor.
All alone—in the night—he is dead.

Have my portraits convinced you, friend Skeptic?
“They are fictions of fancy and paint.” Well,
I know it is growing the fashion
To disbelieve Satan and hell.
Mayhap ’t is that selfishness cultured
Is subtler, and daintier too,
And its proud will would risk heaven sooner
Than fear hell, wrong’s consequent true.
But yon west is aflame ’neath the blue,
And the moon like a cloudlet lies,
Awaiting its spirit, when gloaming
Shall deepen the crystalline skies.
My Skeptic, now shadows seem real,
And real things shadows I trow;
But the truth will be shaped for us sharply
Somewhere, at some time. Let us go.

“By the Shining Big Sea Water.”

In the forest, vast and somber,
In the pine forest, great and silent,
Columned like some ancient temple,
Dim and shadowy, receding—
In the northland of cool waters—
Came we and sat down alone.
Sailing in the still, blue heaven,
In the silence of the sunshine,
The wild eagle sees an ocean
From his poise on level pinions
High above, of changeless verdure;
Save where spreads a sheet of silver
Rimmed with greener larch and birch trees
Plumy green, or white and spectral.
Silvery in the noontide whiteness—
Blue as baby's eyes at dawning,
When the wild loon's crazy laughter
Harshly startles wood and water—
Trembling emerald, like a mirror
Giving back green forest shadows,

Ere the shell-like pink of sunset
Flushes wave and sky in blushes,
Ere the round moon through the tree tops
Trails a glowing path of glory.
Such the forest girted waters
Of the Northland's wooded lakes.
Here the wild duck flies securely
Out from sedge and dripping cedar;
The king-fisher dips and rises—
Shakes his chattering castanet—
Calling to his mate awaiting.
Here the red deer from the shadows
Cool, come to the plashy margin,
Gazing still with great eyes 'round them
On the limpid deeps about them,
Where they drink their fill, content.
Back in fern and fen are waters
Cold and hidden in the marshes,
Where mosquito's thin, wee viol
Shrills all day, and shrills in darkness.
Here the spotted brook trout's haunt is,
And the pheasant drums and wanders
In the time when berries ripen,
In the brief, bright summer time.
When the stars look down at midnight
Through the stillness and the darkness.

Where the corpse flower ghastly blossoms,
White as death in stem, leaf, flower,
In the damp, black hemlock shadows
Shuddering sounds affright the darkness,
Quivering, wailing, answering mournful
To the wolf's lone howl afar.
Voices these of brooding darkness,
Solitude and woods primeval.



Haunted.

My home is haunted, every room
Is filled with ghosts I cannot lay;
Strive as I may, they will not go,
But troop about me every way:
Upstairs and down they follow me,
And meet me on the stair,
And come between my book and me,
And stand beside my chair.

No sound falls from their silent feet
Through all the chambers clean and still;
They come and go as clouds in March
The withered fields with shadows fill.
Dear little forms, that earth nor heaven
Can give me back, from time and change;
And those who gladdened dawn and noon,
Whom Azrael took, and friends estranged.

Ah, time of dearth, chill winter time,
That holds entombed the summer weather,
Your sad winds moan through gloom and frost
And ye and I are drear together.

But spring will brighten hill and vale,
And may not I find life anew—
My shadows warm to living love,
In resurrection dear and true?



My Kingdom.

I have a kingdom—small, 't is true,
But it is every whit my own;
And ne'er, albeit in grander state.
Was king so safe upon his throne.
When like a hollow shell, the east
Turns pearly pink, I rise in peace,
And all the livelong day command
In perfect trust till night's surcease.

My ministers, the trooping months,
Bring lavish treasure to my feet,
And they, with Love prime minister,
My palace for a queen make meet.
I feel—but words are weak to tell
The tribute seasons' varied charms,
From Winter, with his bright, cold looks,
To Spring, with roses in her arms.

But oh, I love the gifts they bring,
The painted fruits and scented flowers,
The flying clouds by shadows chased,
The moist wind from the April showers,

The splendor of the August sun
A-quiver o'er the bladed maize,
The sumac's and rock maple's bloom,
On hillsides in October's haze;
No less I love the white repose
Which changes each familiar place,
As when a strange, pale beauty falls
In silence on some long loved face.

My kingdom gives me hill and plain,
And woods and mountains, where the sun
Tips rosy heights in waking dawn,
Or purple crags when day is done.
Broad rivers roll, and brawling streams,
In light and shadow to the sea,
And that, with bellying white sails flecked,
The blue, broad ocean swells for me!

All this my realm is, by the right
Divinely born of poesy,
But 't is not all my rightful dower,
Nor yet is it most prized by me;
My palace where my throne is set,
Where faithful service bars out fear,
Where duty done, is diadem
Most precious, my heart is here.

Sometimes I see a snarling pack
Of social tigers rage outside—
Of envy, malice, secret wrong,
And grudging selfishness and pride.
But they may gnash their bloodless teeth,
I laugh behind a safe redoubt,
For simple-hearted love and truth
Guard home and shut the rabble out.

Yes I 've a kingdom, large enough,
And blest because it 's all my own,
Most blest, though some have grander state;
So safe and peaceful is my throne.
When daylight meets the evening stars,
And sleep in Lethe folds the day,
May some pale loved one gone before
Remove all doubts and show the way.

Betrothal.

Mine, are you dearest,
Tender and true;
Mine all more steadfast
When years shall ensue?
O my heart throbbing slow
Almost in pain,
What chills your thrilling
To sadness again?

Dear lips have told me
How I am loved,
Bidding me trust the faith
Time has not proved;
Yet in this twilight cold,
Starlit and still,
Wanders my restless soul,
Trembling and chill.

O, all my best life
Which you, dear, have waked
For joy or for sorrow,
On your love is staked.

There 's a sigh on my lip,
And my heart is so still,
For the love that can save me
Will your heart fulfill?



Summer Rain.

To the throbbing of the thunder,
Like the heart beat of warm June,
In the languor of its blushes,
Beats the summer shower's rune.
I can see the bright lines shining
To yon far cloud's silvery rain,
Of the slanting crystal raindrops
That tinkle on the pane.

How the riant June rejoices
In the warm and balmy rain,
From the wood that standeth solemn
Before the smoky plain,
To the brick and mortar cities,
Whose wealth and woe grow still,
While the showers from the bosom
Of the summer clouds distil.

Like a benison the murmur
On the roof drifts down to me.
All life's dead and desolate days,
All its pain and passion flee;

For the fingers of the shower
That play on pool and stream,
Touch my jangled nerves with lethe,
Till existence seems a dream.

Now the rumbling of the thunder,
Like a roll of distant drums,
Beats retreat, but still in flashes
Rosy lightning southward comes.
With a sun burst sudden silence
Cuts the shining lines in two
When the green earth, bright with flowers,
Seems an Eden, fresh and new.

The Old Year's Address.

The last bright beam of day
Lingered within the opal west.
High in the still, clear air above
Poised the pale moon, and trembling stars,
As dimmed the amber west, like diamonds glowed,
In heaven's far depths. Silent and swift,
Night's shadow swept abroad, and not a sound
Stirred on the icy air, save in the lonely woods,
The owlet's hoot, or by the stream, the snap
Of shooting frost. Old Earth had wrapped a robe
Of frozen white about her and she slept.
Pallid and prone, the dying year delayed,
And beckoned with lifted arm and backward glance
The dead years gone—like wreathing smoke—
And thus he spoke—

“It seems but yesterday
The bluebird in the wild March wind,
Swaying on sunny tree tops, whistled merrily.
The deepening sunshine smiled with golden glow,
Brightening the faded landscape, while

On distant hills the buds took browner hue.
Red maple tassels drew the roving bee
To sun kissed woods, whose sheltered spots
'Mong fallen leaves showed early violets.
Meanwhile, the crocus, tho' some lingering snow
Spotted the sward and slopes on sunless hills,
Brightened the garden borders, and anon
Soft winds from southern lands and flowers
Stole hither, and shook out the April bloom.
Oh, then the air, like a cathedral vast,
Was full of incense and sweet harmony!
The peewee and the wren sang all day long,
Their modest hymn of love and happiness,
And the brown robin told of coming showers;
While in the fields the yellow meadow lark
Sang to the sunshine in full hearted joy.
Among the apple blooms, a cloud of bees
Made murmurous melody; across the fields
The red-bud's blushes and the dogwood's snow
Spread airy, while farther on
Beside the rocky stream, hillgirt and lone,
The angler tried his skill. Soon furrowed fields,
Across black mold, showed tender rows of green,
Which the June sunshine warmed to lusty growth,
Rustling, dark bladed, and beplumed,
Then royal roses came, earnest of summer time

Of still, bright days, wide poured o'er deepest green,
Where basking amid the indolent heat,
All nature seemed to dream the hours away.
Above, the white clouds sailed like argosies,
Their shadows trailing o'er the fields,
While o'er the cottage porch, and manse's grounds,
A fragrant wealth of bloom was spread.
Anon, sudden gloom swept o'er the sky,
And muttering thunder rumbled in the west;
Pink forked lightning shot from cloud to cloud,
Followed by rattling peals. Then solemn gloom
Crept o'er the scene, expectant, hushed,
And human hearts beat slow with nameless awe,
Till, smoking white, the distant shower fell fast
And great bright drops preluded near approach.
Then fell the deluge—house roofs smoked,
Hollows poured cascades, and the streamlets roared;
Each thirsty leaf was drenched, and cornfields bowed.
Scarcely knew the sun, returned from rolling clouds,
The fainting scene it left an hour ago!
Next came sweet Autumn, beautiful and sad,
In gold and crimson, orange and russet brown.
Majestic stood the woods as some grand queen,
Yet mournful in her state, as of the bride of death.
Soft summer winds still kissed her scarlet lips,
But breathed a sigh through all her bright decay.

At night the hoar frost tipped ~~with~~ silvery rime
The boughs, the green sward and the sloping roof;
Like gay seducer, kissed the verdure fresh,
And left a ruin where it found all fair.
Shriveled and brown, the oak leaves hung aloft,
Where squirrels sped and sought their winter store
And deep within the naked leafless wood,
The hunters gun and baying hound were heard,
While children 'mid the heaps of rustling leaves,
With shout and laughter, sought the fallen nuts.
Soon o'er the sky dark leaden clouds were spread,
And wailing blasts the rifled earth swept o'er.
The jays in conclave, noisily complained,
And in the orchard, robbed of all its wealth,
With taps mysterious, the sapsuck climbed.
And then, from northern wastes of snow,
Where the weird light of borealis streams;
And the cold sun ne'er climbs the zenith up
Come fluttering fairies of the winter time!
Busy and cheerful, 'gainst the coming storm
When darkened clouds shake out the feathery snow,
And all the land is frozen white and dead.
The new year leaped triumphant on the earth,
Grasping the Old Year's hand, one second e'er
He turned and joined the thronging shades
Out to Eternity.

To My Baby Boy.

I have a new darling
So sweetly fair,
With great glorious eyes
And soft wavy hair.

His lips are like cherries
Or strawberries sweet,
It fills me with ecstasy
When our lips meet!

His cheeks are a sea shell
Of pearliest pink,
And his smile is a love fount
I blissfully drink.

The clasp of his arms
Is a lethe divine
Soothing all care
From this heart of mine.

Never a purer love
Since long ago,

Came sweet as morning
With rapturous glow.

Not since a babe myself,
Sweet child like thee,
Clasped to her bosom
Mother held me!



Victorious.

Shake out the folds of our once haughty banner,
Lift it in triumph ye breezes once more;
Sunshine of heaven again proudly gild it,
There are worthy sons yet of the sires of yore!

Take up the cry all ye sad ones who waited,
Grieving in gloom for our country and them,
Now ye have cause for a proud exultation,
They have battled like heroes, your brave western men.

In the blaze of the cannon, the thick rain of shot,
These, whose footsteps yet lingered at home almost warm,
Moved like veterans of battle, tho' comrades were dying,
And the cold winter sky rained a pitiless storm.

Yes, fling out our flag on its own native breezes,
And shake out the shadows it silently caught;
We have cause now for pride in its starry out waving,
In the battle our strong western heroes have fought.

Yet toll the bell one passing knell
For the true hearted,
Who fought so well, and fighting fell,
The conquering departed.

The Sleet Storm.

Hither I draw my rocker
Beside the window pane,
To look with my little darling
Out on the winter rain;
How solemnly slow it falleth.

Misty white through the darkened air
And it sobs like a grieving spirit,
Pouring out its plaint in prayer.

Look deary, at yonder branches,
How thickly strung with gems—
And even the blackened weedstalks
Have pearls strung on all their stems.
Glittering pendants fringe the eve-trough,
From many a freezing stream,
And the ground is a-glare with crystal
Of a wondrous pearl like gleam.

Yon forest trees that erstwhiles
Looked like giants grim and vast,
Tossing their black arms angrily
To the bitter winter blast.

Now stand in fairy vestment,
White and dainty as bridal lace,
And the gloom of the cold storm wraps them
In calm majestic grace.

Can it be, oh thou leaden sky
Dropping thy wintry tears
Epitome of our lives
After youth's gladder years—
Can it be that the selfsame sun
Which glowed in the bright June days,
Yet treasures behind thy clouds
The wealth of his summer rays?

Let us draw the curtain darling,
And stir the cheerful fire,
Shutting out the stormy weather
And pile the hickory higher!
What matters it my deary,
That the scene is drear and cold,
While mother looks in your eyes dear,
And you sweet, her arms enfold!

To My Husband.

I love to sit at eventide,
When chance has left me lone,
And idly dream and dreamily hear
The night winds outside moan;
To sit beside the wood fire's flames,
And mark its cheerful roar,
While with expectant heart I wait
For footfalls at the door.

The toil of busy day is done,
And in the inviting bed,
In softest, sweetest rest is laid
Each darling little head.
They 've flung their little garments there,
Their shoes upon the floor—
I see them smiling as I wait
For footfalls at the door.

How many busy years ago
I sat and questioned fate
While blushing and with beating heart,
Waiting as now I wait.

But I was fair and slender then,
And now my youth is o'er
Yet still with loving heart I wait
Those foot falls at the door.

We 've had our share of toil and pain,
And heart ache too, from wrong,
But we ~~were~~ one in heart and soul,
And he was wise and strong.
So tho' the years have left their scars,
And more than half are o'er,
My heart beats stronger while I wait
Those footfalls at the door.

He 's coming, for I hear the gate,
And down the garden path,
The quick, firm step I know so well,
Coming back home at last.
Ah heart be glad! he's smiling there,
And pray for years, before
Those welcome steps shall cease to bring
That true heart to the door.

The Birds Have Come Again.

The birds have come again,
Those blossoms of the air,
Lured back by brightening sunshine,
From tropic regions fair;
From shining woods, which slumbered
In heated, trembling air,
Festooned and sweet with many
A climber rich and rare!
From glossy groves of orange
With odorous fruit of gold.
From pale green, shining rice fields,
Back to their haunts of old—
Haunts loved so strong and strangely
When all is bare and cold!

The blue-bird like some orchid,
Swings on the locust spray,
But no flower's richest incense
Is sweet as his wild lay!
How it gushes in its gladness
Against the deep blue sky,

Though the ruthless March wind buffets
The tossing boughs on high,
And out from the leafless forest,
Or the reddening maples nigh,
I hear with a spell of gladness,
The sugar bird's sweet cry,
And over the corn field frozen,
I hear the noisy crow,
And it is a sound of promise,
For winter wanes, we know.
And the jays come trooping, noisy,
To the orchards in and out,
Though they, yet gay and hardy,
Have tarried still about.

When the flush of early morning,
Tints the marvelous frost robe white,
Which spreads the sward with silver,
And the sprays with crystal bright,
All through the day's chill sunshine,
'Till stars shine out at night,
I hear the sparrows singing,
So cheerily and sweet
As it mattered not the morrow
Might be drear, with clouds and sleet.
The bravest of the early throng,
And first, a hardy sprite,

His modest beauty I love best,
And best his song so bright.
Oh dear, brave, little singer,
Out on the bushes bare,
I would I had your courage—
Your faith in pain and care!



Under the Plum Trees.

Under the plum trees I stand alone.—
Ah me, it seems not that a year has flown;—
For there where the fitful sunshine breaks,
Hangs the rich fruit in purple flakes!
And above them bends the selfsame sky,
With the Autumn clouds drifting darkly by,
Hiding betimes the tender glow,
Of the golden sunshine as they go.
And yonder woods as I turn around,
Are catching the same sad tinge of brown;
And the jays are calling in garulous glee,
To their answering mates from tree to tree.
There 's a sound like a sigh in the cool wind's play,
That brings heavy tears to my eyes to-day;
For it seems so the same, just the same as then,
That I catch myself turning to you again,—
And emptiness stands beside me alone,
And I cry as I feel you are wholly gone—
Dear mother, who loved me for years and years,
Do you see, do you heed my despondent tears;

Can you see my heart full of pain and regret,
For the sorrowful happening since last we met,
And its struggles to reach a higher way
That will bridge over death to Eternity? *
Oh reach out and help me, so helpful and true,
And pray God to help me climb upward to you!



At Rest.

How peacefully they sleep,
Low in their grassy bed,
With folded hands and dreamless eyes,
The quiet dead.

For them life's fight is o'er,
Its rankling hatreds done,
No wrong nor pain shall move them more
Under the sun.

Sad footsteps slowly seek
Their lowly couch and part
With reverent hands its waving green,
O'er the still heart.

Their love is sealed and shrined,
Made sacred by their doom
Nor human ruth nor greed will rob
The insensate tomb.

Ah! if to living hearts,
Such charity were given,
Despite the sorrows of this world
Life might be heaven!

Parting Words.

When lovers part at eventide,
To meet again tomorrow,
With laughing lips and backward glance,
Undimmed by thought of sorrow,
Ah, then as glows the sickle moon,
And soft distils the dew,
What other word so fitting sweet
As "Love adieu, adieu."

When true friends part, whose lives in one,
Like rippling streamlets blended,
As clinging hands and tearful eyes
Bespeak that all is ended,
Ah, then beneath life's summer noon,
Or Autumn's stormier sky,
What word so fond on friendship's lips
As "Friend, good-by, good-by."

When o'er some life knit to our own,
Death's darkness settles stilly,
As fades the lovelight from their eyes,
And falls the clasped hand chilly,

With raining tears and aching loss,
That years may not dispel,
The tortured heart throbs to the lips,
“Farewell, beloved, farewell.”



Winter Evening.

I am watching the amber gloaming,
Of a bright mid-winter day,
And I see the gold and rose color
Fade from the West away,
Through the interlacing branches,
Like lace o'er silken sheen,
The fading glory trembles
To twilight's opal green.

And while it changes, quivers
A star out in the glow,
And faintly a curve of silver
Bends near it like a bow,
Shooting with deepening lustre,
Pale gleams of light around,
Which sharpen the wavering shadows,
Black and broad upon the ground.

Where the braided brooklet rimples
In June toward the sea,
I hear the frost's sharp kisses,
And owl's lone monody,—

Deep in the forest's darkness
How it shudders in the gloom,
Quavering across the moonlight
Like a prophesy of doom.

Where are the buds of beauty
That bloomed in summer time,
Shaking perfume on the breezes
As in some southern clime—
Brown leaves, rain sodden, only,
Lie frozen on the mold,
And bleached weeds rattle ghostly
In the North wind's icy cold.

Faded all summer's beauty,
But in its stead, sublime,
The grander hues and outlines
Of northern winter time.
Thus may my life be fashioned
As fades its youth and bloom
Its outlines and its sunset,
Be grandest near the tomb.

Memory's Picture.

There is a spot in memory,
Forever dear to me,
I have not seen for many a year,
And never more shall see.
But fancy's art restores it still,
That scene of long ago,
Among its grand old circling hills,
And river's rythmic flow.
I see again the gray old home,
Low browed with porches round,
Half hid among the clustering trees
With blooming creepers bound.
The garden filled with luscious fruits,
Sweet herbs and old time flowers,
The orchard fair, with peach and pear
Or bloom in drifting showers.
The hills are green that lap it in
Against the sapphire sky,
Where sail the snowy summer clouds
Above their summits high.

Across their steeps, through leafy woods,
And fields of lush green grass,
Where feed the glossy ~~mild~~ eyed kine,
My childish foot steps pass
To where the river's white sands glow
'Mid many a shifting bar,
Across its deep blue glassy tide,
Where shadows trail afar,
Or sunshine sparkles on the rush
Of shallows winding swift,
With gurgling murmur in and out
The meeting bar's slight rift.
The spring below the yard is deep,
Its brooklet broken oft
By frequent ledge of shelving rock,
In cascades falling soft.
It wanders where the restless light,
At nightfall's darkened hour,
Of marsh fire lightly lifts and floats,
And blue wild lillies flower.
And there, where fringy willows droop,
And scent the wandering breeze,
The blackbird, with his red tipped wings,
All day trolls in the ~~trees~~.
Beyond it leaves the quaggy fen,
For bottoms rich and black,

Where, shining, rustle plumed corn fields
And stand the meadow stacks.
There too, broad woods with thickets laced,
Where odorous grape vines cling,
And blushing crab, and snowy plum,
Their dainty perfumes fling
Beyond the brakes and woodlawn green,
Upon the breath of Spring.
And here among sweet smelling leaves
That rustle as we walk,
We seek the paw paw, golden brown,
Beneath its leafless stalk,
Where looking up the maples flame,
In gold and glowing red,
Beneath October's artist touch,
Like sunset overhead.
The Indian-arrow, like some gem,
By cunning craftsman made,
Hangs rosy, pendant on its shrub
Outside the forest's shade.
We gather it, and coral haws,
From wild rose by the way,
With golden tangle from the fence,
In many a graceful spray.
To where the hill road, homeward bound,
Climbs steep o'er ledges gray.

Ah, Nature's wealth, unstinted, rich,
 Within my apron piled
By loving hands which take my own,
 And lead me as a child;
What else has ever seemed so good
 In all life's changeful space,
Since much is past, as these sweet things,
 And mother's loving face.
From some green hilltop might I see,
 As sinks the western sun,
Behind the hills in golden mist,
 While stars come one by one—
Once more across the wooded vale,
 Wind stirred in mimic waves,
Where winds the river's tangled light
 About my loved ones' graves.
Of all who made this dear old scene
 So beautiful to me,
But one is left; they sleep in peace
 Within that wooded lea.
The blight of time is over all,
 Aye, even over me,
But while I live, that scene will be
 A changeless memory.

Work While the Day Lasts.

Work while the day lasts,
Night comes apace,—
Toil nor encouragement
There shall have place!
Dearer than diamonds
Each priceless hour,
Making life's transient day,
Failure or power.

Flowers are thick about,
Fragrant and fair,
Sunshine makes glorious
The blue fields of air;
Though hope be fainting,
With waiting and care,
Use the good offered,
And baffle despair.

Many the foes of life,
Stabbing its peace,
Virtue and vigilance
Can work surcease;

Hold out till evening comes,
3 Worn tho' you be,
Soon sinks the western sun,
Night sets you free.



In Memoriam.

Dead—while the frail roses lingering live
And breathe in the sunshine, existence is sweet.
Dead—in the spring time tho' under June's sky
Spring's promise and summer's glad fruitfulness meet.

Dead—tho' yon little bird swings in the sun,
Its glad carol swelling in measureless glee,
'Mid flower's perfume, and the sunshine's deep glow,
It is bliss breathes his song just to live and to be.

White as ghost-flowers in twilight pine woods,
He lies in death's shadow, in silence for aye,
No throb breaks his rest, still and cold as the snow,
When it silently spreads under winter's dark sky.

Ah, sweet may the waking be over the sea,
That swells between us and the land of the leal,
Where the hopes that are withered here blossom anew,
And the sorrows which wound us forever will heal.

To My Daughter.

I have a treasure, only death
I trust can ever rob me of;
So precious, that my human heart
Yearns with it up to God in love.
As sunshine bursts o'er silver clouds,
Or crystal waters gush in light,
This dear love springs spontaneously
In prayer, up to Almighty might.

She is the blossom of a life
Hard buffeted by many storms,
A crimson rose in Autumn time,
'Mong falling leaves, and naked thorns.
In her, I see the shadowed glance
Whose love lit a Madonna face,
In benison through childhood's day;
And hers the pure and simple grace
Of one, whose eyes were blue as depths
Of summer skies in royal June.
Alas of all, my Autumn rose,
Alone is left to me in bloom!

And yet not so—this pure deep love
Has won me as no creeds could do—
And with her face upon my heart
I look up for the others too,
And feel that I shall find them yet
With her dear hand warm in mine own
I see with simple, natural faith,
And every dreary doubt is flown.

So even death can only part
My treasure from me for a space,
Since thro' its preciousness, my heart
Has sought and found a biding place.
As sunshine bursts o'er silver clouds
Or crystal fountains gurgling bright,
Maternal love instinctively
Springs upward into heavenly light.



Vale.

Did'st ever know a friendship die?

I have, ah, well-a-day,

I thought it all my own, and it

Is dead and gone today!

No spasm crossed its smiling face

Or heaved its tranquil breast,

For me was all the loss and pain,

The mourner's lone unrest.

It was no fault of mine it died,

I saw with numb dismay

The wrong which like a serpent crept

And silent coiled to slay;

I thought that heart was good and true,

Else mine were not so sore,

Yet love by wrong or coldness touched

Can perfect be no more

Pride drops her poppies on my brow,

Why make such useless moan,

'Tis best to put away the dead

And leave them there alone,

One last farewell, above this grave
No soft rains will fall on,
No white stone lifted heavenward,
Mark what is dead and gone.



Two Moods.

I am tired, oh Father of all,
And I lift up my hands to Heaven,
Praying life's burdens may fall,
And rest be eternally given.

Rest from endeavors that fail,
Hopes strangled in tears and strife,
Loves torn when no tears avail,
Quick and bleeding away from life.

Storm-beaten and weary of all
I long for unchanging rest,
Where feeling or thought ever can
Shake and torture my living breast.

I beat on yon storm-locked sky
With the pangs of a great desire,
"Till cleaving its gloom, my cry
Brings succor from wrack and mire.

For I am aweary of all
That befalleth us under the sun,
And I long as a traveller worn,
For rest, when the day is done.

Sunshine.

Gay little spring birds so merrily trilling
Out in the bare old brown cherry tree,
Ye gather the sunshine in crystalized melody,
And scatter the jewels in scintil^lant glee.

There's a deep golden tenderness out in to-day
Half sweet, half pathetic, like long, long ago,
When a child, I threw open the casement to listen
The robins loved song in the cedars below.
'T is a pleasure so sad as the ^{past}like a wave
Flows back into memory, 't is almost a woe.

I look in the deeps of the far away blue,
Like a glorified smile in its soft bending glow,
And my soul bursts in song as the wooing south wind,
Awakens and shakes out the flowers ablow.

'T is a beautiful world, and simply to be
Is bliss, and I joy in the glorious sun,
With the careless ephemera taking faint heed
That at sunset the sunshine and day will be done.

To ONE I LOVE.

A sunbeam shines athwart the clouds,
Though cold and darkly drifts the storm,
At worst 't is but a stormy day,
Tomorrow may be fair and warm;
Today is not the only day,
The sun may shine tomorrow dear,
And where the clouds hang heavy now
Tomorrow may be crystal clear.

Our sun drops low within the west,
And where its fading glories burn
The sweet good years of youth went out,
Yet tho' they never can return,
Today is not the only day,
Somewhere—I hope so truly dear,
Is something better than we know
Or ever dreamed of, living here.

Life is a tangled skein to me,
I only know my dreams are sweet,
And feel the comfort of the strong
Life that throughout nature beats.

That is "the varied God," my soul
Like a dumb baby on its mother's breast,
Is hushed and comforted, to leave
Unstraightened all the tangled rest.

And hope that where our sun goes out,
May be a radiant open door,
The past, at most a stormy day
Forever and forever o'er.

Though all the air is dark with storm,
And day sinks low within the west,
Tomorrow brings another dawn,
And it may be of all the best.

Compensation.

My heart is full when numbers come;

I sing not when I' m gay,

But when the shadows of my life

Fall round me grim and gray;

When glittering hopes have burst to froth,

Like bubbles on the air,

Leaving my empty longing soul,

Naught but life's sordid care;

When through the mirage ~~over~~ life,

Pain pierces to the sand,

Whose barrenness alone is true,

With unrelenting hand;

When falls athwart life's waning hour,

Long shadows of unrest,

The sense of unexerted strength,

And failure for the best;

Then through those shadows grim and gray,

Comes from I know not where,

A spirit, whispering sweetest things,

But viewless as the air;

And I am comforted, and sing,
Tho' weak the strains may be
To other ears, who cannot know
The sweet things shown to me.



Aftermath.

A cricket sang on the cozy hearth
Of a fireplace broad and deep,
Where the rings of the backlog, huge and black,
Showed a century's backward sweep;
And the leaping flames and curling smoke
Through the forestick's bulky pile,
Was cheery welcome that wintry day
As the warmth of a loving smile.

Through the small deep window near at hand,
The winter sky gloomed in,
Where the first snow blossoms shook their bloom
Through the treetops bare and grim;
But the firelight laughed on the log-lined wall
And the dressers shining row,
And even the musket hung aloft
Glinted bright in the peaceful glow.

A woman sat by the cabin fire,
With a hand on either knee,
Her hair as gray as the snowy sky
Of a winter's day could be;

And the fitful firelight leaped and fell
O'er the quaint old woman's face,
Her sad brown eyes, so deep with thought
Gazing into the fireplace.

"Ah me! it is five and thirty years
Since we kissed and said good bye,
Where the laurel blossoms clustered pink
Underneath the sweet June sky,
Yet I seem to see the speckled trout
'Mong the rocks of the mountain stream
Where the honey suckle, white and sweet,
O'er shadowed its shining gleam.

And I look in the tops of the fragrant pines
As they whisper sweet and low,
With your arm around me as we kissed
And parted so long ago.
For father had met with sad reverse,
And the great stone house was sold,
Where some of our kith and kin had dwelt
Till the home was gray and old.

And o'er the mountain toward the sun
When it sinks by the evening star,
Through trackless forests, of many a league,
We must take up our way afar.
'T was weeks on weeks we floated on
Through the endless forest gloam,

Till we stopped at a fort on the river bank
And started to build a home.

Only a cabin rude and low,
With the wild woods thick around,
And father's hands unused to toil,
To clear up and till the ground.
But once, on a day I'll never forget,
There rode on a splendid bay
A strong young settler to our door,
And offered to help and stay.

And father was glad and mother smiled,
And bad^e me be good to Dent,
For he was the son of the richest man
In all of our settlement.
He was ruddy and tall, and very soon
I knew why he came to stay,
But ah, my thoughts were over the hills
'Mong the laurels far away.

And I told him it could never be,
But little he seemed to heed,
And never a longed for letter came
To help in my sorest need;
But at last a neighbor brought us news
From the hills where the trout streams ran,
And I heard in a daze the cruel words,
"John Paul is a married man!"

Ah me! what mattered my faithful heart
Or Dent's rough backwood's ways,
I could give plenty and rest and peace
To father's and mother's days.
It was so little to me, I thought,
For I was twice shipwrecked then,
When I kissed my mate by the rocky stream
In my old home's mountain glen.

And I married Dent. Wrong is never right,
I learned to my bitter shame,
When two weeks later o'er all those leagues
My first love letter came!
The treacherous savage in his wilds,
And the mighty river's sweep
Had spared and sped, whilst I—oh God,
Had failed my troth to keep!

The years have come and the years have gone,
And I sit by the fire's dull light,
With bleaching head in a cabin home,
Widowed and poor tonight.
My children gone to distant homes,
And Dent fills a drunkard's grave,
For rough though he was, he knew full well
That duty was all I gave.

And father's and mother's gray hairs went
With sorrow down to the grave.

And I think the wrong which had ruined me,
Their conscience never forgave;
For back where the trout stream glinted bright,
Near my dear old mountain home,
My mate, unmated, was dwelling still
In wealth and honor—alone.

Oh I sometimes wish I could see him yet,
Though my hair is bleaching fast,
In spite of the wrong and dreary years
That parted us in the past.
I wonder is that my son come home
Who walks to my cabin door?
Thank God for the light of a loving face
When my old heart beats so sore!

'T is a stranger with a furrowed face
And hair like milkweed's floss,
But courtlier than my cabin door
Before has stepped across;
One piercing look, and at his feet
Like a shadow still and gray,
She sinks while the wood-fire's welcoming light
Lifts and falls in fitful play.

Like clover bloom in the Autumn time
When frosts are coming fast,
To these fading lives with their hearts of youth
Came a fruitful bloom at last;

And the cricket sang as mad with joy
In the firelight's laughing light,
While the gray old man and woman stood
Heart to heart in the winter night.



“Breaking.”

Breaking, as breaks the autumn clouds
Where the sun sinks low of a changeful day;
Breaking, as breaks the shrinking waves
Of ebb-tide on the seashore gray.
Once fair to see, now fading fast,
Pathos o'er all familiar ways,
Changed, yet the same as she softly moves
In the work yet left for her winter days.
A solemn dream in her old eyes dwells
As bright with tears through her glasses seen,
For she lives far more in the sweet bygone,
Though dead, than today where her graves are green.
Yet her voice is sweet with old time love
When cares or pains or sorrows stir,
Yet who ever hears her merry laugh
As they did when “the children” played nigh her?
Her step grows slow, for haste is done,
Ah me—ah me! that it must be so—
For alas—she has ^{but} few loves left
Who need that she come or that she go!

For one, June's splendor lies brown and sere,
November's rime over beard and head,
And she and her loving long loved ways
The best that is left of *his* vanished dead.

I know the *q*uest of her restless hands
So gladly busy not long ago,
Though oft times prest till a sigh escaped
At the hours so swift, and hands too slow;
They seek unthought the vanished hands
Some, ever reaching and elinging so
Her life seemed theirs, and the losing them
Left only the husk of long ago.

Ah those who dutiful, sometimes come,
Back with new loves she never bore,
Though reverent, are not the ones who seemed
All, all *her* own in those days of yore.
Like bells in the twilight faintly rung,
Like music that drifts and melts away,
Like the scent where a scattered rose has bloomed,
Are the memories of ages waning day.

Farewell to the Old Year.

Passing, as we mortals pass
Viewlessly away,
Smiling wanner every sunrise,
Sadder day by day.

In the air thy shroud is weaving,
Desolate winds make moan,
And the dark sky pall-like bendeth
Where thou dyest—alone.

Farewell, in the very shudder
Of thy knell,
Hearkening, shall a peal of welcome
Steal and swell.

Other days of breeze and blossom,
And shower, and sun,
Shall fill the summer green with gladness
As thou hast done.

Flowers will spring above the dead
At rest with thee,
The coming close above the gone,
Unmindfully.

Ho for the Woods!

Out of the madding crowd,
 Away from toil and care,
On the might of white winged steam,
 Away through the July glare;
What hope and promised peace
 In the stretch of the iron track
To the northland's wind swept lakes,
 And its hemlock shadows black.

Cast not a thought behind
 To the cornfields, waving black,
Or the white heat quivering o'er
 The wheatland's golden back;
And not a backward thought
 Of the busy, dusty ways,
Where thick walls mesh the sun,
 And hold the burning days.

But on with strong desire
 Where blue waves lap the shore,
And jagged pines keep watch
 On the white beach ever more;

Where Norway columns red,
Lift dusky arches high,
Murmurous as summer seas,
Under a cloudless sky.

There where no axe has cleft,
In solitudes profound,
The sinuous trout streams run,
Darkling the rocks around;
And by some lonely lake
The red deer antlered stands,
Mid flowering lily-pads,
Beyond its hoof-marked sands.

When evening's sun sinks low,
In deeps of rose and gold,
When wierd loons shriek high
In strong flight swift and bold;
When mellow whip-poor-wills
Make sweet the thicket's gloam,
And through the clear crisp dusk
The whizzing night-hawks roam—

Then pile the resined logs
Till red flames flush the night,
And showers of sparks on high
Glow each tall pine alight;
As jest or stories pass
From lip to lip with zest.

Like children out of school
Recline in careless rest.
Then think in blest content,
Of summer's quivering heat,
On field and parching plain,
And thronging, dusty street;
Fair gleams the forest tent
Against night's starry crown,
And sweet its hemlock couch
As monarch's bed of down!



Jest Jake's Old Nance.

Come four and I must be a stirrin'—
Though makin' soap 's my restin' spell
For Brock and Spot, and Crummie cow,
And Red, and Brindle with the bell,
Must all be milked, and breakfast got,
And dishes washed, and in the sun
The milk things sot, to sweeten 'em
Before the mornin's work is done.
Some folks would think—no, kind o' doubt—
My play spell anything but fun.
A totin' water from the branch
From sun-up to the setting sun.
But Lor'! the blue and bendin' sky
Seems just to laugh away up there,
And clouds sail white and lazy by
Across the shiny upper air!
If I can't loaf, it rests me some
To see these things that do have fun,
From birds and posies to the clouds,
All pleasin' in the April sun—

I stop a minute by the branch
To hear it lap among the stones,
And quile down on a mossy log,
I say, to rest a mite my bones—
But on that limber twig a bird
All black and orange weaves a nest,
Jest like a basket, cunnin' thing,
And sings like it would bust its vest!
And friskin' up a hickory tree
I see a gray squirrel's bushy tail,
And 'cross the worm-fence hear Bob White,
In the old meddar from a quail.
Now Jake, he laughs at wemen's whims,
And jest considers work or trade,
But Lor'! I want you friend to tell
Why all these purty things are made.
I think sometimes when I 'm alone,
If I 'd a had a better chance,
That maybe—maybe I 'd a made—
Oh nonsense—only Jake's old Nance!
But though I 'm homely and I 'm old
My heart most busts for something more.
Sometimes, than I have ever seed,
Or known or felt, it gits so sore!
A woman has a hard time shore
A keepin' house, upstairs and down.

And raisin' youngones, till the streaks
Come grizzly where her head was brown;
But hardest yet of all, is when
The younguns, men and wemen grown,
Without a thought of all that's done,
Go off and leave her old and lone.
Jake says good reddence—he is glad
They 'll make their salt and he kin rest,
But I—maybe I am a fool—
But 't seems all loss and heart-break jest,
I hope the preacher tells the truth,
Where once a month I git to hear
'Bout rest and love beyond the vale,
But I can 't make it seem quite clear.
I think our souls get withered up,
When all the love goes out, and none
Comes back, or next to none.
And makin' soap is counted fun.

The Town Clock.

Up in the sunshine, high in the wind,
Up in the downpour of shower and storm,
Up where the snowflakes fly with the frost
Or lightning beats thro' the languor warm,
All seasons and times I hear thy bell
Like a watch at sea, chiming "all is well."

Like a dream I see the sweet bright days
When the air held surfeit of apple blooms,
And the wheat but promised at summer-tide
A winter store from its bearded plumes,
Alas! where drifted youth's glorious spell
With the years you took, oh robber bell!

The sickle rusts by the gathered grain
And hoar frost falls on the stubble bare,
The larks no more their dappled breasts
Shall swell in song, in the summer air,
Ah me! ah me! we loved them well,
But they went as you called, oh dreary bell.

Up in your tower you rule the town
Below, and call to it out of the sky,

For we love and do as you grant us time,
We triumph or fail, we are born and die;
You gather the hours, our years you tell,
And we drift away as you toll our knell.



All is Well.

When stars are in the solemn sky
And darkness broods upon the deep,
As plows the ship through awful wastes,
The night-watch wakes while others sleep,
And o'er the waters toss and swell,
Muezzin-like calls "all is well."

When winds, like furies, shriek and rage
And beat the black sea into foam,
By hissing masts and staggering decks
And breaking waves that surge and comb,
The night-watch strikes the timely bell
And hushes fear with "all is well."

The master's vigil on the bridge,
Slow pacing, scans the sea and sky,
And like a benediction sweeps
The moonshine's glory from on high;
In storm or calm, the night-watch bell
Rings out assurance, "all is well."

Oh what to those who go in ships
Upon the deep, from home and love,

His God-like promise in the dark
Keeping and caring up above!
Father! Beyond the oceans swell
Faith's night-watch whispers "all is well."



The Cricket's Festival-

There 's a festival of music
All unheralded begun,
Where was only dew and silence
At the setting of the sun.
But you hear the wee musicians
Playing now where 're you go,
And their castanets are beating,
And their viols ^htr^humming low;
How they rasp their tiny fiddles
With a shrill insistant bow;
And pick their airy banjoes
Where the rippling grasses flow,
With a vibrant din and elamor
Mark their measures fast and slow.
When midsummer's sun pours hottest
Through the long, long, fainting day
Or night's purple sky is girdled
With the jewelled milky way,
Hear the fairy viols pulsing
In the harvest fields of hay—

While the meadow sparrow gurgles
His andante tenor lay
'Till the silver moon hangs shining
On the rosy hem of day.

Where the honeysuckle clambers
Surfeit sweet beside the door,
Lifts a quavering tremolo
Shaking, trilling o'er and o'er;
All the fervid summer hours
Tells his lovelay with a will,
Yet grows sadly slow and slower
When the days come short and chill,
And the thrumming all is silent
In the grass on lea and hill.
Little poet of the bushes,*
Oh my Meister of the throng,
With persistence never faltering,
With a courage ever strong,
How you shame the bard faint-hearted,
Who is trolling you this song!
Would your loving inspiration
Through life's season were her part,
Singing ever, optimistic,
'Till the cold crept to her heart.

*The bush cricket.

November.

The darkened sky bends low,
 To hilltops sere and brown,
And from the naked trees
 The last dead leaves drift down.
The dust whirls in the gust
 And rustling leaves fly fast,
And in the air is token chill
 Of snowflakes on the blast.

Out in the stubble-fields
 The quail in coveys feed
In silence, for no boastful note
 Proclaims the proud cock's lead;
And from the rifled woods
 The timid rabbit hops,
And for the brown thrush now the crow
 Calls harsh from bare tree tops.


Beside the shrunken brook,
 Nestled in verdure deep.
One little keepsake of the spring.
 A dandelion, asleep;

And from the hazel copse
 Flute-throated sparrow song
Bursts for a minute, as in June
 It rang the land along.

But all the day is gray,
 And naught can make it seem
That yesterday October's gold
 Was bright by hill and stream.
And when its sullen gray
 Is gashed by sullener red
At eve, low in the west,
 Sweet autumn will be dead.



January.



Pale falls the sunshine of the winter's day
On whitened fields and forests bare and gray.

For days the air has blossomed white with snow,
And gathered soft on hill and vale below.

The river's deep tide ever rolling on,
And brook that leaps the rocks, alike are gone.

No life in all the desolate stillness stirs,
No timid wild thing runs, or swift wing whirs.

In haunts of man, the crisp white of the street,
Rings elfin bells beneath the hurrying feet.

On sunset's pallid glow I darkly trace
The twiggy tree-tops, like a silken lace.

And darkness falls, and in the deep, cold sky,
The stars seem frozen, still and bright on high.

Common Lives.

My song shall be for the common folk,
And everyday lives and brains,
Who are born in this world and live and die,
Just as it shines or rains;
Coming because they have to come,
And living they know not why,
To suffer the ills of their little day.
And, clinging to life, to die.

No storied marble recites their tale
Of trial, of triumph, or fame,
Or tells if their lives were right or wrong,
Or treasures their nameless name;
Yet were only the few whose names are great
The wardens of time and earth,
Both land and sea were primal waste,
And glory had never birth.

For warriors must have a serried host
Of these nameless ones to wield,
Or never renown from war had been,
And never a battle-field;

And kings would miss their high estate,
And their crown, and throne, alone—
For these common folk are the ruler's might
And their arms uphold the throne.

They plant and reap, and weave and build,
And the world with lightening span,
Working with myriad hands and might
What else were a fruitless plan.
From sea to sea, and across the sea
Speeds the power their hands have wrought,
And without them these mighty gifts of toil
For men, would have come to naught.

Thrice blessed the meek in spirit are,
Obscure though their earthly way,
For the struggle and envy of prouder lives
Ne'er poisons their peaceful day;
And at last when the great and small shall rise
From out of the leveling sod,
Earth's mighty may suffer a great surprise
At the judgement bar of God!

Love and Friendship.

Love is a summer's day
 Shimmering in its heat;
Its sky bends radiant
 Unfathomed deeps above.
Drunken its ardent breath
 As wine and poppy mixed,—
Yet wooed with milder light,
 Bird songs and early bloom,
In cool and dewy morn,
 'Till hour by hour o'ercome,
Heedless the swooning noon,
 Faint 'mong its roses, yields
Through all its depths, the tyrant sun
 Blending the day and sunshine into one.

Friendship, October's is,
 Its fullness, and its peace!
Chaste is its breath of balm
 And calm its mellower sky,
Soft hazed its fruitful boughs,
 And veiled its hardy flowers.

Yet hath it warmth and light
And rich with apples piled,
And golden grain its day,
Lo! all of the October time
Ripens and sweetens for another's sake.



In December.

—♦—
Dost thou know 't is nearly Christmas,
And what are your thoughts about,
Climbing gayly on my window
In the sunshine from without?
'Twas but yesterday the snowflakes
Whirled and fluttered in the blast,
And the dead leaves, and bare branches
Show that summertime is past!
All thy gauzy kith and kindred
From their summer haunts have fled,
And with autumn's latest blossoms,
Pale chrysanthemums, are dead.
Now what keeps thee on my window
Out of dogdays left behind,
Buzzing gayly, though so little,
And the last one of thy kind?
Why with summer-time insistence
Dost thou scramble o'er my book,
Or with plucky importunity
Fill my spectacles outlook?

Dost thou seek thy vanished comrades
On this white leaf's lettered breast,
Or life's losses, and its crosses
By a fellow feeling guessed,
In my eyes? Oh waif of summer,
Soon the mercury will fall
'Till the world is dead and frozen,
And the sky hang like a pall.
'T is no use thy brave pretending—
Stouter hearts have bowed to fate,
When their longing found fulfillment
Never more, or all too late—
Yet mayhap like thee 't were wiser
To accept the wintry sun,
And its dearth, with cheerful seeming
'Till life's little day is done.



The Rain is Over and Gone.



The rain is over and gone,

The clouds are breaking away,
And a hint of sunshine glints

In and out their shifting play.
The wren pipes his mellow note

Above where the daffy's blow,
With the robin's rollicking song
And the peewee's minor low;
A thrill stirs the warm green day,
Where silence an hour ago
In gloom, from the weeping clouds
Swept over the scene below.

The rain is over and gone,

And the wind is gathering back,
With swift invisible touch,

The lightning's drapery black;
Pouring out the sunshine broad.

Over golden fields of grain,
Dark rustling fields of maize,
And green, kine dotted plain.

Where brooded an hour ago
In languid drowsy repose,
The spell of midsummer's heat,
The moist breeze westward blows.

The rain is over and gone,
The storm clouds are rolling back,
Settling low in the steely north,
A wind writhed and sullen wrack.
Yon gold and crimson fire
That wanders the hillsides, falls
In showering sparks that kindle
The ivy clambered walls,
And the woods, and waysides lonely
And down by the riverside.



To My Canary.

As sweet as yellow daffodils
That early light the borders chill,
And cheery as the sunshine's glow
That deepens when the March winds blow,
 Though clouds hang low,
 And all around lies silent snow,
Thy liquid, rippling bell like chime,
That swells and fills the lonely time.

Unmindful thou 'rt **p**risoned, and
No deeps of blue thy wings expand,
No **b**osky shades, no nesting mate,
In slumberous isles of ocean wait,
 And only me,
 An alien, loves to bide with thee,
Yet thou couldst show the proud and great
How gayly thou dost conquer fate!

I stand rebuked by thy sweet song,
Thou wee weak heir of ancient wrong,
Whose heart in thrall can beat so high
And scatter gladness free, while *I*

Forever and forever sigh,
Oh light of other days gone by.
Oh hearts that sleep, oh hearts grown cold,
Oh ^r_Λdearest years when I am old!



Christmas Chimes.

Ring out mellow Christmas bells
Message sweet for all to hear—
Stay our selfish rush and struggle
One brief day in all the year.

Ring out 'till all hearts shall hearken
They are bretheren on this day,
And the scars and stains of passion,
Wrong and rancor put away.

Peace on earth—good will to men,
Ring out clearly mellow chimes,
Thrilling every heart to feeling
Love and charity, from the time.

Stay our feet 'till we remember
All must go one common way,
And the common lot of mortals
Clouds alike our little day.

Peace on earth—good will to men,
Let it light the wintry gloom
With a glow beyond the sunshine,
Fairer than the summer's bloom.



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